

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS
(Section of the Library Association)

HON. EDITOR: T. I. M. CLULOW
(Kingston-upon-Thames Public Library)

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The Library Assistant ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE members of this Section, in common with their colleagues in the Library Association, were deeply sensible of the debt the profession owed to His late Majesty King George V, and mourn his passing. They will, we know, extend their sincere sympathy to the Queen and the Royal Family in their bereavement; while to King Edward VIII they proffer loyal greetings on his Accession.

We are pleased to be able to announce that Mr. F. M. Gardner will continue to edit "Recommended Books." The high reputation of this journal was worthily sustained and enhanced in his hands, and it is good to know that his abilities are not wholly to be lost from the Section. We ourselves can pay him no higher tribute than to say, that our policy will follow the lines he laid down: in providing a forum for the youth of the profession, to look to the future rather than to dwell on the past; to give new ideas a chance to cross swords with reaction, whether in articles or correspondence. With this in mind, we appeal to our readers to come forward as writers, and assure them of our sympathetic consideration at all times.

Our elevation to the Editorial chair creates a vacancy for a London member of the Council. Nominations, signed by two members of the Section, must reach the Hon. Secretary, *not later* than Wednesday, 12th February. If an election is necessary, it will take place by show of hands at the March meeting.

The result of the ballot on amalgamation with the Library Association was announced at the January Council meeting, and is as follows: *For the proposals*, 1,071; *against*, 610. As the necessary two-thirds majority was not obtained, the Council decided to report the result to the Council of the Library Association, and, in the meantime, to take no further action.

The Annual Meeting will be held in London on Wednesday, 8th April. Details will be announced later; meantime, please note the date.

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The Inaugural Meeting on 8th January attracted, as usual, a large audience to hear Mr. G. D. H. Cole; but, owing to his sudden illness and a misunderstanding regarding the date, they had perforce to be disappointed. We hope, however, to publish his paper in a later number. Mr. R. D. Hilton Smith was also, unfortunately, unable to attend for the formal presentation which was to have been made to him, but sent a graceful letter of thanks, akin to that which we print with our correspondence this month.

The next meeting of the Section will be held on 12th February, 1936, at 3.30 p.m. at Dagenham. Mr. Basil H. Smith, F.L.A. (Norwich), the speaker chosen by the Eastern Division, will read a paper entitled, *Lines of policy: an examination of some of the suggestions made by Professor Laski at Manchester, 1935*. The Chairman of Dagenham Libraries Committee, Mr. Edward E. Hennem, will preside. The library, which is Dagenham's newest branch, is in Rectory Road, five minutes' walk from Heathway Underground Station. Buses 87, 145, 148, 175 to Church Elm Lane are also convenient. Tea will be provided by the Dagenham staff, and members intending to be present are asked to notify Mr. W. C. Pugsley not later than 10th February.

A dance will be held at Chaucer House on Wednesday, 19th February. Tickets, 2s., from Mr. W. C. Pugsley, Branch Library, Chadwell Heath, Romford.

The Hon. Treasurer asks us to publish a belated reminder for Transitional members that their subscriptions for 1936 became due on 1st January. Those attached to the Central Association should send their subscriptions direct to him, but those attached to a Division should send them to the appropriate Divisional Treasurer.

Correspondence Courses.—Students are reminded that applications for the Revision Courses for the Intermediate Section must reach Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24, by 20th February, after which date no application will be considered. These revision courses are intended only for students who have previously sat for the Intermediate Exam-

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ination. In no circumstances will any other application be considered. Full particulars of the courses are to be found in the current *Library Association year book*, or they may be obtained from Mr. Martin, as above.

Library Association Examinations.—The next examinations will be held in May. Entries on the official form must be sent to the office of the Library Association, Chaucer House, Malet Place, London, W.C.1, to reach the Secretary not later than the 31st March, 1936.

LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES BRANCH

The next meeting of the London and Home Counties Branch will be held on 26th February at 6.30 p.m. at Chaucer House. This will consist of the 13th Annual General Business Meeting, followed by a paper on "Reference library policy in London libraries outside the central area," by Mr. F. Seymour Smith, F.L.A., Deputy Librarian, Hornsey Public Libraries.

The reading list on Rudyard Kipling which appears as a supplement to Recommended Books has been distributed free to subscribers. Non-subscribers may obtain copies at the following rates, including postage :

1,000, 15s. ; 500, 10s. ; 100, 2s. 6d.

Orders should be sent to F. M. Gardner, Public Library, Kensal Rise, London, N.W.10.

TENDENCIES

A. C. PANTER

NOW that so many phases of modern thought and life are being overhauled in the effort to fit them into some sort of a planned existence, it may prove profitable to glance at the present state of libraries in their position face to face with modern affairs. A first glimpse of conditions to-day is not at all encouraging. We see millions who, when they are actually at work, are so occupied by that work as a means of getting a bare existence, that they have no time for living itself. Their leisure is taken up by mere forms of distraction, cheap films at the cinema, cheap forms of literature, cheap cars on the road, possibly some form of sport, more often than not as a passive spectator than as an active participant. We have left the old conception of the craftsman making an article from start to finish, and enjoying the work for its own sake; the only idea which mass-production has substituted is that work is a thing to be done in as quick a time as possible for the highest amount of wages. There is abroad in the nation to-day no spirit of service to the commonwealth. Political forms are outworn; most of the leading men are cut off from knowledge of, and sympathy with, ever-changing conditions by the barrier of age. Extremist herd groups, such as Communism and Fascism, compete for those who show any enthusiasm at all. Science marches forward inexorably, but many of its achievements are being won in the realms of pure knowledge, and have no bearing on ordinary life. Art, deprived of material support, dissipates its energies in the harmless vapourings of cranks, and the ineffectual strivings of individuals. Our literature, although in no other age has there been so high a general level of competence and quality, is on very many occasions unreal, and often shirks the issues plainly before it.

It would be a mistake, however, to be too pessimistic. This age is a testing-time, and as all such times have been in the past, an age in which it is extremely difficult to see progress which is actually going on under our eyes. Nevertheless, if the library has anything of value to give to the modern world, now is the time to show it, as it gathers itself ready for the next great strides forward. Believing, as most of us do, that we are about to enter a period of unprecedented library activity—the new buildings just erected in the country in difficult times are symptomatic of coming events—we must endeavour to set our house in order for the future. It is at this point that a divergence of opinion becomes apparent. On the one hand, we have the argument

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that the library should set out to be a moulder of modern thought; on the other, that it should be a handmaid to knowledge, and follow after.

At first glance the former course seems more attractive and desirable. It is not until it is examined very closely that drawbacks become apparent. For instance, between the first conception of a new idea and its general acceptance in this country, there is always an appreciable amount of time. If the library is to be a missionary type of institution for the inculcation of new thought, it must try to shorten this intervening period. But the conservatism innate in most of those whom we serve, is a barrier difficult to surmount. This seems to show that, unless a very great and remarkable change takes place, it will be increasingly difficult for the library to alter its field, except in so far as the average reader alters. For, if we are to lead, we must appeal to those types of mind which are thinking and intellectual (I do not use the word narrowly). If we do this in the main, we shall be apt to lose many of the ordinary class of reader.

The whole question of the postulated aims of the library arises here. It is argued that, as we are servants of the public, we must endeavour to supply what it needs. The public, it is said, pays the piper, and to follow its expressions of demand is the only natural and right thing to do. The other conception is that we are a post-school educational institution, and should use our influence to supply works of good standard only. One thing is certain, that the cycle of big issues is now over—a fact for which many explanations, ranging from unemployment factors, through twopenny libraries, to weather changes (this last, surely the utmost limit of misguided reasoning) have been brought forward. One can certainly sympathize with chief librarians when facing a hostile committee, if a huge drop on the last year's issues has become evident, but if emphasis in the future is placed more on quality than quantity, this last difficulty should be easy to settle. After all, the library is not a business institution faced with the problem of making a material profit. Most of its lasting achievements are in any case in the realm of the mind, and more often than not hidden from the library itself. The question, in a more restricted form, thus resolves itself largely into the old problem of the popular and the recreative, against the educational and the uplifting.

There is a hackneyed phrase in the 1927 Report of the Public Libraries Committee that the library has to serve "not only the earnest seekers after knowledge, but also those who are gratifying an elementary curiosity, and those who are seeking relaxation and recreation." This seems to indicate a sort of

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catholic compromise between the two schools of thought. However, there now seems to be a growing opinion that recreation is not enough, and that the attempt to put relaxation and uplift into double harness will be doomed to failure. We hear to-day quite a lot of talk of the literature of escape, but, as Mr. Robert Lynd remarks in an essay arising out of Professor Laski's recent speech to the Library Association, "the great objection to trash is not that it is a drug which enables the reader to escape from the monotonies of existence, but that it is an inferior drug." He continues with a personal doubt, not thinking that reading "will become much more intelligent than it is to-day, till the mass of people have been persuaded how much more delightful a toy and pastime a good book is than a trashy one." However, it must be remembered that escape is not in itself a bad thing; at times it becomes absolutely necessary in one form or another. We all recognize the need of this when we declare at holiday periods that we wish to hear no more of libraries for a time. Mr. Lynd's last point, however, seems to sum up the real aim of the library, provision of the best, rather than an unthinking and unproductive supply of inferior stuff. It is true that formal education has taught the mass of the people to read, but it has instilled no sense of discrimination. Admittedly, it is an extremely difficult task to teach even the rudiments of criticism, a factor which, in the past, has led to the inclusion of large indigestible slabs of history in the curricula of various subjects, particularly in secondary schools, to the detriment of the development of the critical faculties. Surely, however, this task must be begun, if only in an elementary manner at first. Too often, to-day, a child's mind is treated as a reservoir into which facts are pumped against the day of examination; if the conception were substituted that it is a fountain, now storing up facts, but one day to give out ideas of its own, a more widespread sense of discrimination would inevitably follow. It seems fairly evident that in the near future the library will come into closer relations with formal education. Whether this is deplored or commended, if we are to succeed under altered conditions, formal education must not be the sleeping partner. It must endeavour, much more than it has done in the past, to set the general level of intellect higher. Otherwise, it seems that closer relations between the two services cannot be at all fruitful, but indeed harmful. As of old, bricks cannot be made without straw.

However, the pessimist among us may well wonder, in the face of recent developments, whether reading and writing will eventually die out among the great mass of people. A hundred years ago the aim of all advanced educational

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thinkers was that everyone should be taught to read and write. That object has been achieved, but now we see that pictures, in the shape of the cinema or illustrated papers, are preferred to the printed form. But, even here, there is hope, as Mr. Osbert Sitwell points out in his recent book of essays, *Penny foolish*. He argues that, in the day when scientific inventions such as three-dimensional television have been perfected, what remains of the reading public will be "loyal and enlightened." The writer in the future "may be conscious that only a few hundred thousand, where to-day there is a possibility of millions, will read his books; but he will know that this public will follow with appreciative discernment every word from his pen." This is not, of course, to argue that readers will then be a band of scholars striving to keep up esoteric forms of knowledge. Rather will they be a great driving force in the community.

This seems to point out the way. The library can endeavour to compromise, as it is doing now, between two types of readers, with the chance that, when the twopenny library craze has burned itself out—as it, assuredly, will—it will find itself partially on the scrapheap of rejected institutions. Alternatively, it can withdraw unobtrusively from the pursuit of the casual reader of light and worthless nonsense, and turn to the building up of an inner core of enlightened readers, numerically small, perhaps, but great from the point that their ideas will pervade all constructive thought. In that day appeals to culture will not be, as they so often are nowadays, meretricious, but will go out to a band of readers with deep-seated knowledge and the ability of thinking for themselves. Scientific humanism, which plays so large a part in modern thought, insists that no progress can be made except as a result of sustained and planned effort. Given a consistent aim, if only this can be substituted for the failures of hit or miss empiricism, there is no reason why it should not be achieved by the library, but, without a well-defined policy, the library can only wander into the twilight of eventual obscurity.

RESTRICTIONS¹

STANLEY HOLLIDAY

THERE is a tendency among librarians to regard public collections of books as being *in themselves* signs of democratic enlightenment and—worse—open doorways to knowledge. The argument which encourages this attitude or tendency may plead in its favour the growth of the sentiment for country-wide service; the excellent work being done by the National Central Library and the Regional Bureaux; the erection of buildings which are architecturally meritorious, and which give an air of freedom and comfort. It may bring forth a battery of statistics to support it. The vast growth of the reading habit, and the colossal increase in the circulation of non-fiction may be cited as evidences of an awakening culture and a general appreciation of the printed word.

Such an argument lays itself open to a good deal of criticism. The sentiment for national service may soon be obscured by the approaching battle over nationalization—a word which is by no means synonymous with the other two. The Regional Bureaux have found their opponents—directly in libraries themselves, and indirectly in the post office—but no unbiased person may gainsay the underlying excellence of the theory which brought them into being. (The county libraries will agree unreservedly.) But it is the citadel itself—the statistical evidence—which invites the strongest attack. The general growth of the reading habit may obviously be attributed to the corresponding general increase in population. The particular increase in reading, which is confined more especially to the towns, is easily attributable to the well-known flow of the people towards urban areas. The increase in non-fiction issues must be considered side by side with the vulgarization of knowledge, for the factor of quantity in present non-fiction reading is effectively cancelled out by the merely fractional element of quality.

And the most considerable factor against the attitude of optimism is that it is determined by an almost wholly mechanist theory of librarianship, which allows of calculation from an objective standpoint on a material basis of profit and loss. The public stands as a fixed symbol to which library service is a variable, and all is well when service divided by public gives, or appears to give, a positive result. The variability of the public itself is never seriously

¹ A paper read at the Southwark Bridge Road Library on 11th December, 1935.

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questioned, which is surprising when suggestion and propaganda are known to comprise the most successful of modern professions.

Yet a careful investigation of the influences to which the public are subjected, and the character of that public, would probably dismiss the conception of an immutable number of actual and potential borrowers. An analysis of a specific section of the population, with regard to age, occupation, and circumstances, when considered together with statistics (which by themselves mean nothing at all) would show the *true* measure of a library's success, and, on the other hand, would ultimately reveal the forces which prevent the use and enjoyment of books. The purpose of this paper is to attempt a broad classification, and to give a sketchy list, of what might reasonably be considered preventative forces or restrictions.

On a first examination it seems that restrictions are tripartite, and to each part a well-worn term may be applied. The most obvious restrictions are concrete or physical, by which is meant forces that actively hinder the getting of books as material objects. Less obvious but more important are mental restrictions, that is, those habits of the mind which prevent or pervert the intellectual appreciation of books. Thirdly, and most important, are moral restrictions, that is, those intuitive and unreasoned prejudices—which may or may not be necessary, of course—which ultimately govern both physical and mental activities.

Physical restrictions may be split up into two—those which, for our purpose, are determined by the outside world, and those which lie, or ought to lie, within the administrative control of librarians themselves.

It is neither smart nor cynical to suggest that the latter are trivial since they are controllable, and merely wait upon progress (in the business efficiency sense) for their obliteration. Yet their removal will cause more argument and assume more importance than, say, any attempt to improve national mental standards. For the physical restrictions encountered in the public library itself are rooted in custom and tradition, have never lacked supporters, nor been found difficult to discuss. Since they have significance in a paper addressed to librarians, they are dealt with first in a very brief fashion.

It is not departing too widely from the canon, as laid down by the chapter headings in *The Year's work*, to describe modern librarianship under the following titles: (1) Buildings, (2) Organization and practice, (3) Stock, (4) Staff and service.

Much literature is given to library architecture. The possibly restrictive

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effect of bricks and mortar has been discovered, although the perennial announcement of this discovery becomes a little wearisome. The idea of books has yet to be expressed in bricks, display is in its infancy, and light and colour are shamefully neglected, but the contemporary recognition of shortcomings is, at least, a step towards the removal of the restrictions they imply. Nevertheless, to save the library movement from a good deal of adverse criticism in the future, a policy of wholesale destruction of all old, and most new, buildings is very necessary, since the majority are sad reminders of a none too practical age.

It is a fact that a number of the public—a mere minority, despite what *The Library World* may say—have been induced to enter library buildings. The immediate reactions of a borrower when past the door are important. These have been described in a recently made and singularly apt remark, which, if it embodies a widespread feeling, is unfortunate for librarians. It is this: "The first hours spent in a library are nearly always unprofitable, partly on account of the newcomer's ignorance of its organization; even more, perhaps, because he is dazed by the strangeness of things. He is apt to feel stupid and act accordingly, and valuable hours are wasted." That is certainly straightforward, and carries a strong condemnation. "*Ignorance of organization*" and "*strangeness*" point to one thing only—a woeful lack of standardization in library practice.

The present situation demands more than occasional invective, for the word confusion describes it exactly. A few random examples may be taken. One is the absence of uniformity in lending-library construction—not merely between separate systems, for distinctly different types of libraries may be encountered in single systems themselves. The constituent libraries of many large towns present a whole scheme of evolution to their astonished public, varying from the overstacked dirtiness of the Central Library to the wide-open spaces and chromium vulgarity of the latest branch. With organization itself the confusion is terrible. Divergent rules and byelaws are accepted as natural. About five systems of classification and cataloguing exist, with results that have never been measured, but must of necessity be appalling, especially when, as so often happens in London, the average borrower is a member of not one, but several libraries, and can scarcely hope thoroughly to familiarize himself with more than one scheme of arrangement. One might add maliciously, that the separate applications of *one* type of classification are sufficiently wild—a recommended pastime is the monthly comparison of Dewey numbers allotted to the same books in the bulletins of any half-dozen libraries.

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But this is by no means all. At least four *ordinary* methods of charging are employed, three of which are obviously unnecessary, while a myriad ways of processing, accessioning, and whatnot are in everyday use. Labels exist, to take a phrase from Shakespeare, "in every blessed shape we know"; registration forms range from elephant folio—that is scarcely an exaggeration—to post card size; numbers and symbols abound in wild profusion, but, with due deference, one suggests that no essential sign is ever plainly to be seen. One would be interested to learn, for example, where—outside of the British Museum—the simple word "Tickets" may be encountered.

With all this we are sometimes so puffed-up as to curse the stupidity of laymen! One has only to imagine the result of a decentralized mailing system, with the production of stamps and postal orders, and the delivery and collection of letters, at the whim of each individual postmaster, to perceive the state of the library system of Great Britain—the state, in fact, from which it is endeavouring painfully to free itself, with considerable expense and loss of time, besides the usual growing pains. It is scarcely necessary to draw morals from this confusion, for the restrictions involved are obvious. They "daze," as our quotation tells us. This is a case when we may agree with Bertrand Russell that "standardization may have disadvantages for the exceptional individual, but probably increases the happiness of the average man."

It is not proposed to point out in detail the physical restrictions which may arise from faulty or biased book selection, beyond the very obvious remark that these are determined merely by the presence or absence of desired books.

Although the introduction of the word *staff* may be considered invidious, one must observe that, even given the best possible policy of librarianship, it is made or marred by the persons by which it is administered. The finest restrictions devisable are bureaucratic officials, of whom one alone may give offence to scores of patrons. The strength of public hostility to employment exchange manners is well known, and it is, perhaps, unfortunate that one should have seen an intending borrower literally thrust out of a library when he dared to intrude into a closed lending department on the sacred half-day. But there is a more pregnant cause for staff defects, and that is, the economic fallacy, which prevails among committees, to the effect that the best labour may be purchased at the cheapest cost. Nothing further need be said of this except to note that the yellow press has to take a little interest in assistants' salaries, and the way is at least clear for local authorities to avoid unpleasant notoriety.

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Such problems as these are, we repeat, trivial when compared with their fellow restrictions. Standardization in general method and practice, like the ultimate nationalization of library service, is inevitable if only for the sake of economy. It is with the influence of the outside world that the real business of restrictions begins—the influence that so thoroughly shatters the conceptions of what we may call the mechanist theory of librarianship.

There has been much talk of sociological conditions and their effect on reading interests, with the readily understood theme that a man who is mentally and physically tired cannot appreciate the advantages of a public library. Yet there has been very little investigation of the physical reactions—immediate and delayed—of men to books, although Vernon lists 157 sources with reference to the experimental study of reading. The book producers of the future may well stand appalled at our ignorance of this subject, since our methods of judging the value of a book in its true light, as an instrument or machine, are merely empirical. We say that such and such a book is unreadable, and feel a vague sense of affront to our good taste—without the least knowledge of the reasons for our criticism. That there is a general appreciation of an immediate physical (besides mental) reaction to books is easily proved by the existence of the dipping habit. And while librarians recognize the necessity for attractive bindings and for rejecting what they term unsuitable print, it is time that deliberate examination of the subject be made, with the object of arriving at some suitable recommendations for book production—not the half-hearted academic conclusion of Vernon, nor the pretentious formulæ which Waples and Tyler have appended to their study of group-reading interests.

Apart from physiological reactions, it is possible, but by no means probable (as a later quotation may show), that adverse social and economic conditions will account for the majority of physical restrictions. There is no need to go over the well-known ground. D. E. Coult, in a paper read to this Association, and Hilda Jennings, in her study of Brynmawr, have depicted admirably—if with some overstatement—the kind of existence which adverse conditions may call into being. The mental numbness, which is its most unfortunate characteristic, causes one to wonder if so-called library work with the unemployed can have any real or lasting value. When books are read as dope, or, in the finest paraphrase of the word I have discovered, as "opiates to soothe into a sweet and temporary forgetfulness," they are neither loved nor understood.

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But I believe it is the relations between the public library and the *leisured* classes that give cause for alarm. Those who comprise these classes do not make adequate or even little use of the public library. That which prevents them is the cross claims of other pursuits besides reading, of which pleasure does not necessarily constitute the whole. One wonders if the future inevitable extension of leisure to the working classes may have similar results; if travel, forms of art appreciation, or handicrafts may not supplant, or at least prevent, the extension of the appreciation of the written word. For example, one has to remember that, whereas broadcast sound requires the ear only, the shortly-to-be television will demand *visual* attention, with what effect on reading remains to be seen.

The physical restrictions which political conditions imply are also obvious in the main—in fact, many would agree that economic and political conditions were the same thing. What is significant for librarians is that municipal politics usually determine book funds. The spiritual descendants of the parliamentary gentleman of Edward Edward's time who never read and did not see why any other person should do so, abound in considerable numbers. They are less blunt than the right honourable of 1850, and usually discourage expenditure on libraries on grounds of a false interpretation of the word economy. In doing so these men strike, not only at the cultural amenities of their own districts, but, also, at national co-operation, which is almost wholly dependent on the health of the separate institutions that make it possible. But municipal politics have lately developed a far more ominous note, and that is contained in the efforts of conflicting parties to ban each other's propaganda. If librarians fail to resist attempts to dictate the contents of their stocks, we shall soon be back to the days when a knightly person could open a library with the remark: "French novels are by their very nature immoral"—and receive applause for this fatuous nonsense!

With consideration of mental restrictions, one enters on the great unknown. One of the profounder things of librarianship, which can neither be taught nor conveyed, but only acquired, is the ability instinctively to take the measure of a borrower's mind. This instinct is by no means infallible, and improvement in the degree of its exactitude suggests study of the influences which go to form an individual mentality. The problem is too wide for the scope of this paper, which will confine itself to mental habits opposed to the fullest appreciation of books.

These habits may be grouped as follows: inherent, and hence practically

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ineradicable; imposed, by what is known as education, but is really teaching; acquired, that is, by social contacts or through force of circumstances; adopted, that is, accepted for some purpose extraneous to purely intellectual needs—generally for financial, social, or spiritual gain. There has been no attempt carefully to preserve this classification in what follows.

Holbrook Jackson has commented at length upon inherent bibliophobia, but has not attempted to explain it. It may have to do, first, with an unreasoned fear of admitting intellectual incapacity, "an inferiority complex in . . . approach to literature," as Jackson calls it, or, as Freud might have it, the dread of impotency; second, with the equally unreasoned distaste for the admission of unpalatable truths which literature may force on the attention. One fears that active bibliophobes must be borne with patience, since the librarian has not the added mission of a psychiatrist.

In his well-known work on Educational Psychology, Charles Fox states: "In the realm of habit, the effects of education in its widest sense are enduring." The term "education in its widest sense" comprises the influences of social life, formal teaching, and that illusive factor known as self-education or *culture*.

The question of the influences of social life presents a curious problem, for great economic stability does not seem to indicate an equivalent mental superiority. Accepting the thesis that potential reading interest is highest where mental qualities are keenest, I propose to quote a paragraph from Gray and Moshinsky's recent research into ability in relation to parental occupation or economic status. The authors state that their opinion is by no means conclusive, but this throws interesting light on my earlier remarks concerning the public library and the leisured classes, and has considerable significance for those engaged in book selection. The quotation, which is preceded by statistical evidence to show that working-class children display considerably more ability than those of the employing, directive, or leisured classes, is from the *Sociological review* of last July, and is as follows: "It may be that intelligent behaviour is stimulated to a high pitch of performance in occupational groups composed of individuals and families engaged in the rapid ascent of the social ladder. In other words, where the conditions of mobility are present [an important qualification, we may add] individuals already selected for other qualities as well as for intelligence [skilled workers] will be making exceptional efforts both for themselves and for their children. On the other hand, when persons have achieved a comparatively high economic status, which is no longer precarious, these efforts may slacken. Similarly

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in the case of unskilled manual workers . . . lack of opportunity to rise in the social scale may deaden the response to intellectual stimuli."

While the relationship between social standing and mental qualities is still in doubt, attention may be turned to the positive restrictions contributed by formal teaching and by self-education. For the most part, the present system of education, both elementary and secondary, by its limitation of ideas, and by its stifling of the non-standard type of child and man, constitutes in itself an effective bar to progress, and more often than not defeats the ends for which it was created. The mania for standard tests and certification for standard performances has persisted for half a century or more. The consequence is that the use of "text" and "set" books has done much to foster downright hatred of certain works—a hatred which is easily and often transferred to books as a whole. A youth cannot regard with interest or affection the grammar or reading-book against which he has battered with pains and tears for a space of years or months. He comes to regard books as symbols of servility, of unwished-for labour. There is a tale of one stalwart Victorian—Max Beerbohm, I believe—who ceremoniously burnt his school books, before proceeding to the university, as a gesture at once of profound contempt and thankfulness for relief. The same attitude of mind must prevail among thousands who leave school annually, for not a tithe of them is discovered to enter libraries.

The shortcomings of the educational system may be laid in great measure at the doors of the county and borough committees, but the uncourageous attitude of the teaching profession, which knows and admits the harm of its present work, should also be censured. The prime faults—so far as we are concerned—are two. First is the closely confined scheme or period of study, which gives overwhelming emphasis to what should be but a detail of education at large. Surely all are acquainted with the university undergraduate who refuses to read except according to syllabus or recommendation of tutors, and has neither the time, nor has been allowed to develop the power, to select works, and study according to his own interests. The result is, that the average graduate, pass or honours man, quits his college with an almost dangerous capacity for concentration, but with a mental background which is by no means sufficient. He has neither the inclination, nor the capacity, to formulate an ordered scheme of general reading.

His lack of inclination and initiative is dominated by the other chief fault of secondary education, authoritarianism in teaching, a fault which it should

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be the librarian's mission in life to correct. It is this that stifles originality, since it is an unwritten law in secondary education for a scholar to be ploughed who dares to disagree, especially on paper, with tutor or teacher. Hence, once plastic and unbiased minds accept theories for facts, and dogma for reason; and hence, the "standard work" is always ten to fifty years behind the results of research.

The man who relies, or is forced to rely, on his efforts to educate himself may proceed to the other extreme, and read widely and wildly—a tendency which accounts for much of the non-fiction issue of to-day. But it should not be beyond the wit of librarians to direct such as these into an ordered scheme of study, despite the fact that "the development of mental attitudes and methods of thinking is an exceedingly difficult and complicated matter."

However much one may generalize, attempt analysis, or formulate opinions, mental restrictions will continue to remain the great unknown, since they are often intangible and always unexpressed. They will remain long after physical barriers have vanished, and their very existence may constitute the claims of the librarian to be a necessary and useful member of the community.

Moral scruples are not difficult to list and classify. But an *offhand* condemnation of the restrictions they imply—censorship, or often deliberate destruction, is as unbalanced and as inefficacious as that which it purports to condemn. Although we place moral restrictions in the forefront of all others, paradoxically enough we propose to give them little attention. For so long as librarians are content to remain merely as servants, as timid handers-out of books, they too, together with the majority of the public, will and must "yield abjectly to . . . emotions in religion, politics, or social relations," as Caswell Ellis puts it. But if they have a will to emerge as directors and leaders of education, if they can show faith and enthusiasm towards freedom in knowledge (even though, for the time being, they are forced to adopt the Machiavellian expedient of proving orthodoxy by heresy), they can, from their very position as distributors and interpreters of fact, gain the support of educated opinion, and may be the very agents to realize the dream of moral sanity.

Librarians must refuse to create "phi" books (as Dorothy Sayers calls the practice of the Bodleian). Who can put Aubrey's *Lives* on the open shelves, can also release Rochester from the cupboard, and defend both as manifestations of an epoch. As for sheer unwarranted filth (and there is so little as not even to demand *thoughts* of action) there is Dr. Laski's reminder of Cromwell's

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dictum—"By the bowels of Christ, gentlemen, exercise discretion!" And one believes it is an entirely mistaken opinion of the textbook which urges exact parallelism in the stock with the religious or political creeds of the borrowers. Dean Inge would not deny right of representation to Bakunin, or Hébert, "the one really vile revolutionist." No Catholic would deny the Talmud, no Jew Aquinas or the Prioress's Tale.

The antidote, the canceller-out, or moral restriction—of which, I take it, it is unnecessary to make a clear definition—is courage, the courage that can move mountains, and sometimes library committees.

This paper was begun in a somewhat gloomy frame of mind. I had taken Charles Lamb too much to heart. For he says of lenders (and hence librarians),¹ "These are born degraded. The leader 'shall serve his brethren.' There is something in the air of one of this cast, lean and suspicious; contrasting with the open, trusting, generous nature of the other race of man—the borrowers—who possess a certain instinctive sovereignty." But who knows? If, one day, librarians begin to perceive signs of kingship in their clientele, they may learn to swallow the nameless griefs and tragedies of their profession, and say with Samuel Weller: "Never mind; there's change of air, plenty to see, and little to do; and all this suits my complaint uncommon!"



THIS STATUS BUSINESS

H. JOLLIFFE

PERHAPS the greatest drawback to the profession of librarianship is the status of its members. I can fully appreciate the fact that it is much better than it used to be, but the question naturally arises, Is it high enough? Are we, as members of what we are wont to call a learned profession, satisfied with the position it holds in its relations with others of a similar nature? The answer to the first question, at any rate to those amongst us who believe in the importance of our work, is an emphatic No. With regard to the second query, however, there appear to be many who are undoubtedly content to let librarianship rest on its laurels.

The point at issue now is, of course, How does our profession stand with regard to others of a similar type? This can best be explained by a story

¹ *The slight adaptation will be noticed.*—S. H.

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retailed by Mr. Ranganathan in his admirable book, *The Five laws of library science*, a story that will bear repetition. A prominent official of a town was asked if he would receive a librarian as his guest. At first, he made arrangements with one of his junior clerks to accommodate the librarian, but the latter, blissfully unaware of the contretemps, proceeded to the official's home, and sent in his card bearing the magic letters M.A. The official, greatly amazed, promptly dismissed the former arrangements, and in a short time was commiserating with his guest on the latter's misfortune, learned as he was, in thus being harnessed to such a poor profession. His amazement, however, was transformed to indignation, when he learned that his "unfortunate" guest was afforded a much higher salary than his own.

The story may, of course, exaggerate the position a little, but nevertheless, it is not wholly wrong. In the past, of course, there was probably some justification in the existence of such a state of affairs, for then, any person was considered fit to hold such a position as that of a custodian of books. The fact, however, remains, that we have not yet succeeded in burying the old system. Consider, for instance, the position of the Municipal Library with regard to the other corporation departments of a town. It is still the "Cinderella," and it is still ranked with such departments, admirable in their way, as the baths, cemeteries, parks, etc. In fact, there are a number of authorities who lump them all together and appoint one committee to look after their interests. In the counties the position is very similar, for there the librarian is subordinate to the Director of Education. Such a state of affairs as I have outlined is intolerable, but we have not to look far for the reason for this peculiar view of the authorities. To put it bluntly, we do not make a profit in net cash. If, by some miraculous means, we succeeded in charging a fixed price for each book we issued, thus making (if we did not go bankrupt) the all-important profit, then nothing would be too good for us. One might quote the words of Bhartrihari in this instance, "It is the gold in his possession that settles the quality of every one of his attributes." The trouble with our job is that the benefits from our work are not discernible all at once. If a man is suffering from toothache, he visits his dentist, and generally speaking he is afforded immediate relief. Such is not the case with the library profession, and because of this its representative, the librarian, is, colloquially speaking, forced to take a back seat.

Now, supposing we admit that our status is not all that it might be, we are naturally confronted with the problem of how to improve it. There are many

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ways of doing this, all more or less useful, but for the sake of clarity, they may be divided into two classes, firstly, those applicable to the library, and secondly, those concerning the staff. The first section, that is, the library, can be dealt with very briefly, for practically every method of improving the library service, and of course its results, has a definite reaction in favour of the librarian, and his staff, and in turn on their status. Publicity, good service, an excellent stock, and a thousand and one other things, all play their parts in this direction, but the essential thing to bear in mind is that the library must be made absolutely necessary to the community.

With regard to the librarian himself, the situation is a little more complex. The most important point, as the Library Association has realized for many years, is undoubtedly professional training. This in recent years has improved, and the Diploma, without undue prejudice, can now be recognized as a qualification quite worth while. But do we ourselves appreciate this point? Do we consider a man who holds the Diploma of the Library Association any better than one who does not? If we do not—and many of us are at fault here—then either our point of view is wrong, or else the whole examination business must be reorganized. In short, unless we pay due regard to our own qualifications, then we cannot expect outsiders to do so.

The next point, equal in importance with that of professional training, is that connected with the thorny subject of salaries. These also have improved, but they are still not good enough. Leaving out the advantages to our pockets, although that is of course an important factor, we must admit that our training, responsibilities, and in fact our whole job demand better salaries. The Library Association grading is a step in the right direction, but it would be interesting to learn how many authorities conformed to such munificent gradings. To settle the question beyond doubt, one need only compare the various advertisements in the local government journals, and note the salaries paid in the different branches of municipal administration.

Let us now look at the more intimate qualifications of the good librarian, which will have an influence on his status. Duff Brown states that he must have tact, courtesy, personality, and must be able to make a useful speech in public. But in my opinion, Brown missed out the most vital point. A librarian should be inspired by an inward conviction of the importance of his work, and of the necessity for it. Call it enthusiasm, interest, or any other name that springs to the mind, but there can still be no doubt as to its importance, and moreover, it will have a profound effect on all with whom its possessor comes into contact.

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Finally, the whole matter can be summed up thus. Speeches, papers, conferences, and publicity of all kinds can do much. The building up of a library according to the very best methods can do still more. But the settling of the whole business rests with the librarian himself. He must have enough confidence to take his place in these higher circles that we would have him frequent, nor must he grumble if much that he encounters fails to interest him. He himself must be well read, for a librarian who continually reads thrillers cannot hope to win the confidence of his public. Lastly, he must not be ashamed of his calling, as so many of us seem to be. We do not wish to advertise our importance from the housetops, yet we must, in a quiet, unobtrusive yet firm way, demonstrate to the world our claim to equality with the other learned professions.



THE DIVISIONS

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

THE last meeting of the year was held in the Central Library, Wallasey, on Friday, 15th November. Mr. W. Wilson, F.L.A., Chief Librarian, welcomed the sixty-three visitors who were present, and stressed the importance of the subject they were about to discuss—Nationalization.

Miss M. Knight, Mr. E. B. Irving, and Mr. E. Moxey put forward what appeared to be an unassailable argument for the change. Their colours were indeed glowing. On the other hand, Mr. A. E. Brown, Mr. J. Elliott, and Mr. F. Higenbottam gave us a glimpse of the reverse side, upon which all was black.

The discussion ran upon similar lines, and the "moderates" received scant attention. Eventually the only possible solution was arrived at: that no decision be made until further details of any proposed scheme of Nationalization be made known. This, of course, proved wholly unsatisfactory to the Right and Left extremists present.

At the conclusion a unanimous vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Wilson and his staff for their excellent arrangement of a very happy meeting.

On Saturday, 14th December, ninety-six members and friends were present at the Christmas Whist Drive held in Lowsby's Café, Rumford Street, Liverpool.

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MIDLAND DIVISION

Herr Heinrich Becker, formerly Head of the Public Library Department of the Prussian Ministry of Education, delivered an admirably comprehensive address on "German libraries" at a meeting held at the George Cadbury Hall, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, under the auspices of the Joint Committee of the Birmingham and District Branch of the Library Association and the Midland Division of the A.A.L. Section, on Wednesday, 20th November, 1935.

In a very clear account of the "scientific" or informational libraries of his country, Herr Becker outlined their size and number, and described such co-operative activities as the *Deutsche Bucherei*, Government organization of specialization in book collection, inter-lending between libraries, co-ordination of efforts to fill war-time gaps in foreign books and periodicals, and the *Gesamtkatalog der Preussischen Bibliotheken*. He also dealt with such matters as the effect of post-war inflation on German libraries, the Prussian cataloguing rules, and professional training. With the German public libraries Dr. Becker confessed that he was less intimate, but indicated that they were not comparable in scope and influence with efficient examples of their counterparts in this country.

The Chairman, Mr. H. M. Cashmore, F.L.A., City Librarian, Birmingham, expressed his admiration for Herr Becker's command of English, and the amazing clarity with which he had delivered a highly technical address. Herr Becker answered several questions from members of his audience, and a cordial vote of thanks, proposed by Mr. H. Percy Marshall, A.L.A., Borough Librarian, Smethwick, and seconded by Mr. H. Grindle, F.L.A., Inspector of Lending Libraries, Birmingham, was carried with enthusiasm. Thanks were expressed to the Senatus of the Colleges for their kindness in placing the Hall at the disposal of the Association.

Mr. William T. Beeston, F.L.A., Chief Librarian of Wolverhampton, arranged a very successful joint meeting of the Birmingham and District Branch of the Library Association and the Midland Division of the A.A.L., attended by 102 persons, at Wolverhampton on Wednesday, 4th December, 1935. In the afternoon a visit to the Goodyear Tyre & Rubber Co. proved keenly interesting and equally informing. It was followed by short calls at the Bushbury and Heath Town Branch Libraries, both of which were much admired, and an inspection of the Central Library. In the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, the Mayor (Mr. Councillor J. Whittaker, J.P.) extended a

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cordial welcome to the visitors, who then enjoyed the hospitality of the Chairmen and Members of the Public Libraries Committee at tea.

Mr. Frank Mason, F.L.A., Branch Librarian at Bushbury, then took the chair at the Junior Meeting, and Mr. Norman Reed, of the Wolverhampton Central Reference Library, read a paper entitled "Is public library work worth while?" He criticized newsroom policy, and suggested a reduction in the number of daily newspapers taken and a more careful selection of periodicals, but opposed newsroom abolition. The children's library he regarded as an admirable institution for equipping the child for the future, provided the right person had charge. For the lending department he expressed a personal lack of enthusiasm, which was, not surprisingly, counterbalanced by a corresponding admiration for reference library work. Mr. Reed concluded by expressing the view that, by virtue of its variety of interest and value to the community, work in a public library is distinctly worth while.

He was followed by a number of speakers who were in strong disagreement with some of his views, but their views scarcely tended to provide a definite answer to the question which was posed by the title of the paper.

Dr. R. S. Morrell then gave a stimulating address on "Some aspects of adult education," and Mr. Beeston followed with "A Medley of library matters: all debatable," in which he reviewed his experiences over forty-three years of librarianship.

The proceedings closed with cordial thanks to Dr. Morrell, Mr. Beeston, the Wolverhampton Public Libraries Committee, and Mr. M. B. Walker.



NEW MEMBERS

CENTRAL.—Leslie W. Bacon (Margate); Joel C. Downing (Merton and Morden); Miss E. Evans (Bethnal Green); Renee Evans (Deptford); A. Fraser, R. M. Strathdee (Midlothian County, Edinburgh); Kathleen J. Fuge, Jacqueline Pollard (Bristol); Miss J. P. Norton (Wilts County, Trowbridge); W. R. Oldfield (Wallsend); E. P. Stanham (St. Andrew's School, Epsom); F. J. Sweeting (Mitcham); E. Wenzelul (Bethnal Green); W. F. Wright (Patent Office Library).

Midland.—Miss E. D. Corbett, R. F. Nason (Coventry); C. G. Hartwright, Miss W. O. Jenkins, Miss A. J. Lewis (Worcester); Miss L. M. Sheaf (Birmingham).

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North-Western.—Alice Gardner (Preston).

South-Eastern.—Daphne J. Hooker (Kent County, Deal) ; John T. White (Margate).

Yorkshire.—Donald Burnett (Bingley).

RESIGNATIONS.—Laura M. Knight, Ernest J. Cooper (Earlsfield) ; Miss I. M. Palmer (East Ham) ; Alexina P. Thomson (Fife County).



CORRESPONDENCE

CENTRAL LIBRARY,
LEWISHAM HIGH ROAD, S.E.14.
10th January, 1936.

THE EDITOR,

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—

Please allow me to thank, through THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT, those members who were associated with the presentation recently made to me and who were not present at the Inaugural Meeting on 8th January.

The wireless set and fitted wardrobe I have received from the Association are beautiful and useful possessions which will serve to remind me (if, indeed, reminding were needful) of many exceedingly happy years as a Councillor and officer of the A.A.L.

During my term of office as Honorary Secretary I had the unfailing support and friendship of my colleagues on the Council and of the members generally. For these, and for the way in which the Association has marked my official connexion with its work, I am deeply grateful. May my successor find as much happiness in the work as I did. Nobody could find more.

Yours sincerely,

R. D. HILTON SMITH.

The Library Assistant

COMMERCIAL AND TECHNICAL LIBRARY,
CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY,
MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS,
LEEDS, I.
1st January, 1936.

THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT,
DEAR SIR,—

It amazes me that the Library Association's recently published plans for a 1938 Examination Syllabus have received no criticism in THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT from the standpoint of increased severity with unchanged qualification value. Do assistants realize that the Association will require, in the increasingly formidable Final Examination, what amounts to a thesis of 10,000 words, with an oral test upon its contents, and with the normal F.L.A. as the hard-won award; whereas formerly such a thesis would have earned a Fellowship with Honours? Notice: no distinction is to be made between the future Fellow (rare that he will be) and those who in the past climbed comfortably up the Sectional ladder. What compensation for his extra efforts is the Fellow to be offered? Equal status with his predecessors!

The obvious solution to this anomaly is to create a higher degree for librarians, to be known as the D.L.A. (Diplomate of the Library Association). If present Fellows wish to raise their status to that of Diplomates, let them pass an additional test, just as an Associate must if he wishes to become a Fellow.

If the Library Association is to discount the words of Mr. John H. I. Cable in the December ASSISTANT, " . . . There is a feeling growing that the Association is imposing in this way a deliberate limit to the number of Fellowships granted " (by reason of the high standard required), they must justify higher standards by giving proportionately higher honours. Their avoidance of this issue can only mean one thing: *betrayal*.

Yours faithfully,
J. R. SMITH.

The Library Assistant

SOUTH WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE DIVISION

Members are asked to notice that the date of the February meeting has been altered to the 12th, when Mr. Hilton Smith will visit us and give an address on American libraries.

Mr. A. J. Griffiths having resigned the Secretaryship of the Division following his appointment as Branch Librarian at Leeds, Mr. W. J. Collett (Newport) has been elected to fill the vacancy, and Mr. L. M. Rees (Swansea) becomes the new Hon. Treasurer.

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